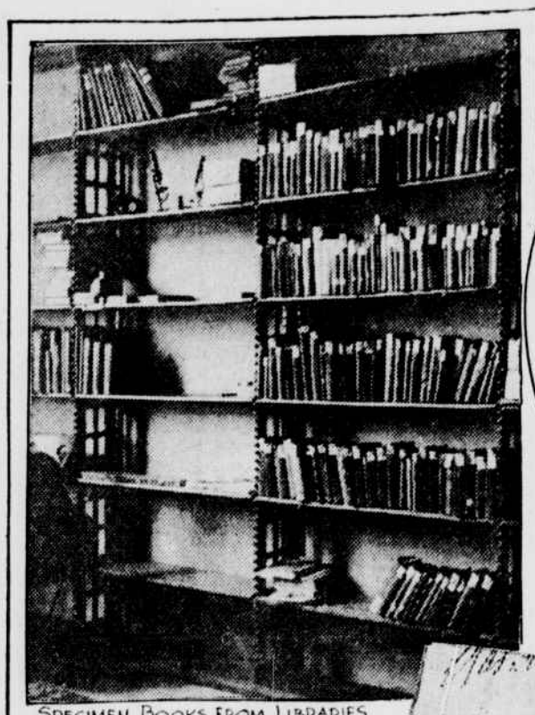
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY HAS ITS POLICE DEPARTMENT

MR FLANIGAN EXAMINING THE PACKAGE OF A VISITOR TO THE LIBRARY



SPECIMEN BOOKS FROM LIBRARIES SCATTERED FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC SHOWING THEIR IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS

A MISSING BOOK LEFT IN EXCHANGE FOR A BOTTLE OF MILK

FIRST PAGE OF A RUSSIAN BOOK SHOWING HOW COHN CUT OUT TITLE PAGES, PASTING THE NAME ON THE FRONT PAGE

ONE OF FAC-SIMILE PEN-AND-INK TITLE PAGES MADE BY THE ITALIAN OPERA SINGER

ONE "BORROWER" SOLD THE BOOKS ON A PUSH-CART.

One Man Is That Department, and His Duties Cover a Wide Range, from Doing Detective Work on Sneak Thieves to Dealing with Plain "Disorderlies."

MR. FLANNIGAN, the gray garbed guardian who stands in the great foyer of the marble library building at Fifth avenue and 42d street, a few days ago observed a man on his way out carrying a bundle under his arm. Mr. Flannigan is a retired officer of the Police Department, having once been a member of Inspector Byrnes's personal staff of detectives.

"What have you in the bundle?" he inquired. This query was not born of impertinent curiosity. It is his business to know what bundles contain.

"Only some soiled clothes which I am taking to the laundry," replied the man with the bundle.

The doorkeeper passed his hand over it. He squeezed it. The contents felt harder than one would expect soiled clothing to feel. He said the bundle would have to be opened. It contained a garment very much soiled. There was a core, which proved to be a work on Egyptology. It bore the identification marks of the library.

It is difficult to connect an interest in Egyptology with a man who will carry soiled linen into such a building as the new public library. It is because it is possible, however strange as it may seem, that there is need for a "special investigator" on the library staff, the existence of, which office became publicly known recently. An average of more than 8,000 volumes annually disappear from the shelves of the various branches of the New York Public Library.

A THEME FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS.

Why any one should take a book so thoroughly earmarked as is a library book is a psychological curiosity. The average value is $1 each. The ways in which a book is marked are so varied and so numerous that it is practically impossible to disguise it so thoroughly that it cannot be identified. Yet the books are taken, and the library has found it necessary to detail a man to perform some of the functions of a police department. It is said that this library is the first to name such an officer. Churches are not immune from thieves. Incongruous as it may seem, therefore, it is perhaps to be expected that an institution of such a character as a library, visited by between 40,000 and 50,000 persons daily, should suffer at the hands of thieves. Indeed, the "special investigator" finds that this community, select though it is in the character of its citizens, is a thoroughly human body and furnishes illustrations of some of the frailties to which human nature is subject.

The "special investigator" is not the product of any school for detectives, although his exploits are worthy of being chronicled with those of the highest grade of detective. He began tracking those who were robbing the library while in charge of the library's work with schools, and exhibited such skill and ingenuity in catching the rogues that he was finally appointed to a post created for him. It was he who discovered a way to secure the address of a fleeing thief from an unwitting postmaster. The thief whom he sought had fled, and it was supposed that he had left his new address with the postmaster of the New Jersey town, a short distance west of the Hudson River, where relatives lived. The postmaster refused to divulge it, if he possessed it, saying that the regulations of the office would not permit him to give an address. The postal authorities refused to direct him to do so.

A registered letter was addressed to the fugitive, and it was stipulated that the receipt should be signed only by the addressee. Among the contents of the letter was a piece of carbon paper. The special investigator figured that the postmaster would write the correct address on the letter for forwarding. He learned at what time the letter might be expected to reach its first destination and on what train it would probably be sent out again. At what he considered to be the psychological moment he telegraphed to the postmaster to return it, believing that upon it would be the desired information, or if the postmaster had tried to obliterate it, it would be found inside under the carbon paper. He received the letter, but there was no fresh address on it, for, apparently, the postmaster had no other. The idea was good, but the man is still at large—unless the assertion of his family that he is dead is correct. This case was the starting point in the work of detecting book thieves. It was so interesting that it stimulated the present investigator to undertake the unravelling of others.

The first trace of this thief and his game came through the office of an engineer in the Brooklyn office of the Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity. One day a man walked in and said:

A THIEF'S DEVISING.

"I am the executor of an estate of an engineer. He specialized in his field and had books, which perhaps you would not be able to get readily, but which you would like to have if you could get them at a reasonable price. We wish to close up the affairs of the estate promptly and will sell at a price which will make it worth your while to place some of them on your shelves. If you will name some books you want I will look through the library and see if they are in it."

A book was mentioned, and in due time it was delivered. The engineer in the Brooklyn office had a sister in one of the libraries and was familiar with library books. Despite the fact that the title page, with its identification marks and all the other numerous evidences that the volume was from a public library, had been eliminated or disguised as thoroughly as possible, the engineer recognized it immediately as a library book.

"Come back this afternoon and the money will be here," said the engineer. Then he telephoned to the library and when the man returned he was arrested and charged in the police court with grand larceny. He was held in $2,000 bail, but "skipped" and has not been seen since.

It has been asserted that after a book has been marked for identification it is not possible to disguise it so thoroughly that it cannot be recognized as a library book and the library to which it belongs named. According to a formal notice once sent to second-hand book dealers by the director, the "marks of ownership may all be removed with apparent success, but evidences and traces of such marks invariably remain. Consequently, purchasers of second-hand books should look for such traces with even greater care than for the actual marks." There are many kinds of marks, such as "a label or book number on the 'round' or back; larger labels, book plates, 'pockets,' and a variety of other slips pasted into books; ownership stamps, including those made with rubber stamps, embossing stamps and perforating stamps, and numerals made both with pen and numbering machines."

IDENTIFICATION MARKS.

These marks are definitely located, each library having its own order. For the New York Library they are found "inside of front cover; on first fly leaf; on title page, both back and front; on first right-hand page after title page; on inside of back cover, and on back fly leaf." In the main library, at Fifth avenue and 42d street, "books are numbered on the ninety-ninth page, lower margin with a numbering stamp. In the circulation branches books are numbered on the ninety-seventh pages, in the margin, inner, top or bottom; other pages with numbers ending in 97—i. e., 197, 297, 397, and so on—are usually stamped with a rubber stamp. Pages used in former times and occasionally found bearing numbers written in ink, or stamped, are 17, 51, 99 and 101."

While all the marks mentioned are not found in any one book, every book contains several of them.

There are many ways of detecting an effort to disguise a library book. "Book plates, labels, 'pockets,' etc., when dampened and removed, leave a surface which may readily be distinguished, upon holding the book to the light at different angles, by a roughened surface and by a difference in shade and color. Erasures made with a knife or rubber may usually be detected by holding a page to the light, and when made with acid usually show a slightly different color and a removal of the 'size.' Rubber stamps may be erased, embossed stamps may be ironed out, and perforated stamps may be filled in.

Ironing out of embossed stamps leaves a surface somewhat roughened, with the 'size' partly removed. Filling in of perforated stamps is rare in library books; the filling will fall out if the page is folded. Removal of ownership marks may be regarded as suspicious. Attempts are made to disguise erasures and removals of all kinds by subsituting new pages, pasting down fly leaves, and by mending or abstracting a mutilated page entirely."

The mutilation of, the absence of, or the insertion of new title pages, or pages 97 or 99, are evidences that the book has been stolen from the New York Public Library.

Recently the investigator captured a man who had preyed upon the library by making good title pages out of bad ones. He had a large collection of title pages from which the identifying marks had been removed by cutting, and he was prepared to replace almost innumerable titles by clever piecing. They were all classified and filed away in soap boxes. It required two patrol wagons to remove his stock in trade.

In the early days of the investigator's experiences with thieves, a man entered his office carrying a copy of Marsh's "Thesaurus," a work almost as large as a dictionary. He offered it for sale and the library official "bit."

Some time afterward the same man appeared with another copy of the same work bound in scarlet morocco with gilt edges and told a "hard luck" story. This time the "game" was suspicious. He looked on page 97 and found the number 1001 written in, but not in the ordinary library hand. He examined the copy first bought and detected erasures. The page number on which the "accession number" appeared indicated that the book came either from a New York or a Brooklyn library.

"Take me to the library," said the possessor of the book, "and if the book is missing arrest me, but this book did not come from that library. I bought it in Montreal for $10.00, and it is my custom to mark on the margin the price I pay for a book."

The library official was willing to agree that the book did not come from either of the libraries, and inquiry in Brooklyn substantiated his theory. He was confident, however, that the book had been taken from some library, for the statement of the man regarding the presence of the number did not explain satisfactorily the fact that the figures were 1001. The book seller was detained for forty-eight hours by the court, as the law allows, pending investigation.

NAILING A SUSPICION.

Dispatches describing the book were sent to many of the libraries along the Atlantic coast, and while the library to which the book might belong was not located, the investigator did learn that Marsh's "Thesaurus" had been taken from several libraries, and the cards removed from the indexes, so that the absence of the book would not be discovered until the end of the year. By this time the forty-eight hours had elapsed. He had no positive evidence upon which to have the man held. Nevertheless, he was convinced that the man was a book thief.

"Give me twenty-four hours more," said he to the court.

The plea was granted, although the court warned him that there was danger of a suit for damages for false arrest.

He argued to himself that the accession number indicated a library of more than 10,000 volumes, but not a large library. The page on which the number was placed, being the same as that used in Brooklyn and New York, suggested that the librarian of the unknown library had been trained in the New York library and had organized other libraries. He went over the list of libraries which had 10,000 or more books and found one which met the other condition. It was in a New Jersey city not many miles from New York. He called the librarian on the telephone, and she said she would be in on the next train. She identified the book. The man was convicted.

On the shelves of the investigator's office is an "invoice" file on the pages of which are pasted specimens of the identifying marks of all the libraries in New York and samples of books from many libraries scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast. When he gets a tip that a book thief has been discovered or that some suspicious looking books have been found anywhere he puts in his pocket before he goes out to work on the problem an envelope whose contents represent years of careful work. It contains a description of all the earmarks for the identification of books.

One day the investigator was called to the East Side to take charge of a push-cart full of books which formed a traveling circulating library. Kalman Cohn, the owner, had fled, leaving the books, which were in foreign languages. They were recognized as library books, although they had been rebound and the title pages containing identifying marks had been removed. The owner of the pushcart library was afterward arrested, charged with receiving stolen property knowing it had been stolen. He was told that if he would assist in bringing to justice the persons who were stealing the books and supplying his library his case would not be pressed. He refused, and when told that he would be sent to Sing Sing for a period of five years replied: "You'll never send me to Sing Sing. I won't go and no one can make me go."

AN HABITUAL SUICIDE.

This was not an idle boast. It came out in court, when his bondsman appeared and stated that his client had committed suicide in Philadelphia, that he had the suicide habit. He had done it once before, and Judge Mulqueen decided he had it too strongly. The case was continued for further investigation. It was brought out that while awaiting trial on a similar charge he had gone down to an East River pier, had carefully removed his coat, in the pocket of which was his citizenship paper, had jumped into the swiftly flowing current, where he was seen to throw up his hands, and had disappeared. A week later his family had identified his body at the morgue, and had had it buried.

It appeared that on this second occasion he had gone to Philadelphia, registered under his own name at a hotel, gone to his room and hung himself. The body was found, stark and cold, hanging from the chandelier when the room was entered in order to put out a fire which had started in it. The body was declared by the bondsman to have been that of Cohn, but there was some doubt in the minds of those acquainted with Cohn's unusual habit. The doubt as to the identity of the corpse was emphasized by the fact that it was cold when the fire was discovered. How could a corpse start a fire? The special investigator was so interested in getting an answer to this question that he went to Philadelphia to study the circumstances.

SUICIDE WAS FINALLY FATAL.

He was finally convinced that Cohn this time was actually dead, for he found that the little pushcart circulator of books, without money with which to buy poison and without a knife or other implement of destruction, had taken matches which he found in the room, burned off a piece of the awning rope and swung himself from the chandelier. The rope had continued to smoulder until finally, after his body had chilled, it set fire to the awning and to the furnishings of the room.

Why do people steal books? Why should a certain Italian opera singer, not unknown in musical circles, take fourteen scores of Italian operas, worth, perhaps, $30, and go to the trouble of replacing the title pages with pen and ink copies? This man, a member of a well known company, when confronted in his home with the charge of theft, asked in grandiloquent grand opera voice:

"Where is the man who said I am a thief?"

Despite the fact that he asserted in detail regarding each book that he had bought it, the courts thought otherwise, and he was convicted.

Why should a man, apparently well-to-do, a graduate of the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania and a graduate pharmacist, steal books and expend all his chemical and mechanical skill in trying to obliterate the identification marks in the scores of books which he had taken from libraries in Wilmington, Del., Washington, Philadelphia, Brooklyn and New York? He had washed with chemicals and ironed the pages, but to no avail, for the books found after his death were all identified.

"One of the first things I ask myself when I get a book thief," said the investigator, "is, 'What's wrong with the poor fellow?'"

There is usually some quirk about their psychological make-up, something that removes them from the list of normal persons. The opera singer was a sufferer from epilepsy. The reader who died after reading Roosevelt was counted "queer." The investigator says that Schmidt, the alleged slayer of Anna Aumuller, was a mook thief, one of his thefts being of a book called "The Manliness of Christ." The man who used to steal books on the German drama and leave them in areaways in exchange for bottles of milk was "off."

BROOKLYN CLINGS TO ITS NAVY YARD

Continued from third page.

the highest class. These he divides into—first, suitability of location; second, capacity, and third, cost of construction, maintenance and operation.

NEW YORK'S POSITION.

Regarding the suitability of location, Captain Van Duzer finds that the position of New York is superior to all ports on the coast as regards depth of water and ordinary ease of entrance and exit, with the single exception of Narragansett Bay. It is the only port on our whole coast which has two entrances separated by a hundred miles. It is nearly in the industrial centre of the coast. It is somewhat further from Europe than Narragansett Bay, but the difference is so small as to be immaterial, while it is a little nearer to the Panama Canal.

"It is easy of defence against sea attack as compared with Narragansett Bay," he adds; "furthermore, New York is always likely to be incomparably the best defended port on the coast, its great interests and the character of its entrance both contributing to this end. A navy yard located below Communipaw is a mile or two further away from possible sea attack than the present yard, and it is far more secure against a landing force than any location on Long Island or almost any other practicable location in New York Harbor or elsewhere. As against a naval raid its security is practically absolute, while any conceivable location in Narragansett Bay is peculiarly open to this form of attack."

Captain Van Duzer estimates the cost of a new yard at Greenville would be $26,521,000. As against this he says:

"If the present yard were sold, the receipts from its sale would go a long way toward paying for the new yard. It may be mentioned that the proposed yard is not only four times greater than the present one as regards berthing capacity and capacity for work, but that it is two or three times as great in shop capacity and storage space. The dock capacity for very large ships is also four times that of the yard at Brooklyn, but even that is not enough to take care of the whole fleet, and two additional similar docks should be added if the proposed yard is to attain its true end."

Congressman John J. Fitzgerald, of Brooklyn, who, it may be significantly observed, is chairman of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, is violently opposed to the proposed removal of the navy yard from Brooklyn. Humorously, he tragically declares: "If they take the navy yard away from Brooklyn they will have to do so over my dead body." Seriously, he says:

"Periodically the abandonment of the Brooklyn navy yard is agitated. Occasionally some one competent to express an opinion engages in this discussion, but most frequently the advocates of the abandonment scheme have some selfish interest to serve.

"It is somewhat curious that the plan to abandon the Brooklyn yard has been most strenuously urged since it has been demonstrated that this yard alone, of all the navy yards, is capable of competing successfully with the best equipped plants in the country in the construction of the modern battleship. At first it was suggested that the Brooklyn navy yard be closed and a new establishment created at Narragansett Bay. This suggestion was advocated by many eminent naval officers. More recently it has been urged that a yard be established in New Jersey, at Greenville, beyond Bayonne.

"It may be true that the yard in Brooklyn is not ideally located. No place selected could be ideal. All would have their defects; but the advantages of Brooklyn more than offset the disadvantages. One of the most important advantages of the present location is that no community depends for its prosperity or its very existence upon the continued employment of the yard facilities at their maximum. While slack times affect many employes, still the community is not dependent upon the condition of work at the yard. New York is a great labor market, where the demand is always large. Men shift from one employment to another with little inconvenience to the community as a whole. It could not do so if isolated and dependent wholly upon one plant.

"AN INDEFENSIBLE BLUNDER."

"While, of course, the chief consideration is the best interests of the government, I am convinced from years of careful study that it would be an indefensible blunder to abandon the Brooklyn yard, with its facilities, to begin the creation, at untold expense, of a new plant at some other place, and I shall resist such a move to the utmost of my ability."

Congressman Eugene F. Kinkead, of New Jersey, is not only loyal to his constituents, but is a loyal New Jerseyman as well. Naturally, he is a most active advocate of the Greenville site. Incidentally, it may be said, he also is a member of the Committee on Appropriations of the House. He is as strong in his opposition to the retention of the navy yard at Brooklyn as is Congressman Fitzgerald in its favor. He says:

"The Brooklyn navy yard, as at present constructed, is uneconomical, is inadequate and inaccessible, while the Greenville site is adequate, economical and accessible. Commandants of the Brooklyn navy yard have repeatedly requested that additional land be purchased in order that the yard might be enlarged, and so made suitable for the requirements of our increased navy.

"It is uneconomical because the supplies coming there from the West and the South—steel from Pittsburgh, lumber from Mississippi or the Carolinas, paints from Michigan—all must be shipped from the mainland across the Hudson River in boats, the handling and rehandling thus adding greatly to the cost of these supplies. Officers of the Brooklyn yard have said to me that the pine used in ship construction there is as costly as mahogany as a result of the number of times it must be handled.

"We have miles of waterfront along the Jersey shore, which can be purchased at a reasonable figure, therefore the site in question can be made large enough to suit our present and future needs. It is the most economical location along the Atlantic seaboard, since in our county we have the eastern terminal of every trunk line, save one. We can, therefore, lay down the paint required in the paint shop, the steel and lumber in that section of the yard where they are required, and by spurs and trackage the handling of supplies can be made simple and economical. Captain Van Duzer makes all this clear in his report.

COST OF PROPOSED SITE.

"The cost of the land for the proposed site is approximately $3,000,000. It is now assessed at $1,500,000. It is owned, I think, at present jointly by the Lehigh Valley Railroad, by a man named Cummings and by a third owner whose name I do not recall. In view of the availability of the proposed Jersey site, I do not think it would be advisable to retain a navy yard at Brooklyn, especially since the land it now occupies would bring so high a figure if sold by the government."

So that is the situation. Irrespective of what Congressmen or others may or may not say on the subject, and in view of the hint given out by Secretary Daniels since his recent inspection of the Greenville site that an enlargement of one of the yards on the Pacific Coast is more urgently needed than the location of the Brooklyn yard at Greenville, which would mean in all an expenditure of not far from $30,000,000, added to the professed policy of economy and retrenchment of the present administration, there seems no probability of the navy yard now at Brooklyn being located at Greenville or elsewhere for several years to come, if then.